

Patrick Tjungurrayi

Language: Pintupi / Kukatja

Patrick Tjungurrayi was born around 1940 deep in the Western Desert at Yalangerri (near Jupiter Well) about 200 kilometres west of Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay). By then Anangu (people of the Western Desert cultural bloc) were vacating their homelands to various settlements on the fringe of the desert. This great migration out of the desert during the mid-twentieth century and then back again in the 1980s shaped his life and art.

The Anangu from the region west of Wilkinkarra comprised several closely related language groups. Some migrated north to the Balgo mission, as Patrick's family did when he was a young initiated man. Balgo is now mainly a Kukatja-speaking place. Others migrated west to the mission at Jigalong, and are now known as the Martu, or east, ending up at Papunya. The latter are known as the Pintupi. Tjungurrayi has connections with all three groups.

Never happy in Papunya, during the 1970s many Pintupi people began reconnecting with relatives in other communities, including Balgo. In 1981 the Pintupi established an outstation at Walungurru (Kintore) and, a few years later, another further west at Kiwirrkurra. Tjungurrayi moved to Walungurru in 1981 and continued moving around the country working in various jobs. In the mid-1980s he returned to Balgo, where he began painting (under the name Patrick Olodoodi Tjungurrayi) for the newly established art centre there. A few years later he moved to Kiwirrkurra and began painting for Papunya Tula Artists which he primarily works for now but he returns regularly to Balgo. He is a senior Law man who looks after ceremony and country between Balgo, Kiwirrkurra and Walungurru.

Tjungurrayi regularly paints his country around Yalangerri. At first he painted in different styles, depending on whether he was in Balgo or Kiwirrkurra, but more recently he has developed a hybrid of the two. In combining the colour of Balgo art with the geometry of the classic Papunya Tula style, his paintings symbolically reunite Anangu culture from around Wilkinkarra.

(Author: Ian McLean)